

THE SOUTH WIND

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THE SOUTH WIND

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THE SOUTH WIND

COME, for the burning days, the restless nights
Have bound us over to malignant powers,
Wherefore the sky with brooding passion lowers,
And dust has choked the wells of all delights,
But we have certain hope that you will rise
Flooding with urgent beauty earth and skies :
Come as of old, divinely, suddenly,
You from the frozen South, and let there show
Upon your brows a lonely sovranty,
While through your wings eternal clarions blow.
And all may know the Power that passes forth,
When legioned clouds are moving north and north.

High on a mountain I shall wait for you,
And find a gully close beneath the brow,
Where scorching winds and heat make havoc now :
The creek is silent and the ferns are few.
There I shall wait and you will scale the height
And break across it shedding left and right
Cool rain, maternal shadow, fragrant air,
Till all the gully breathes and wakes and sings,
Bird calls to bird with all the love they share,
And by the rushing creek the fern-frond swings.
The mountain knows the Power that passes forth,
For strong clouds move across it north and north.

The weary city waits for you, her sea
Stilled in a glare, her air a deathly pit
Now stagnant, now with moving pillars lit
Of tawny dust that holds men's hearts in fee,
But you by night or morning soon will soar
Across the place as through an open door,

And then by night and morning we shall share
Your purity sped taintless from the pole,
And feel by you that this our daily air
Has life to stir the body, feed the soul,
So shall we know the Power that passes forth
When yielding rain the clouds go north and north.

Come wrapt in radiance, peace and blinding storm,
And raise your songs where league-long breakers are,
With leaping powerful shadows near and far
Till all your soul finds utterance in your form,
And we shall pass inspired along the days,
Young-eyed again, to wonder and to gaze,
To feel by day the shining world renewed,
Melodious tumults pouring through the hours,
The nights a moonlit, windswept solitude
With clouds of God arrayed like altar-flowers.
And all men know the Power that passes forth,
When radiant clouds are drifting north and north.

THE AWAKENER

BLACKBIRD, you sweet, you cruel,
You with the perfect song before the sun,
Where is my soul to run ?
I fear the lucid challenge you fling down,
Jewel on jewel.
“ Great Beauty comes,” you cry, “ O weave her
crown ! ”

Blackbird, you chanting early,
You say, “ We dwell not here, not here, not here,
No, in that throbbing sphere,
That morning-star ! Gaze ! It will vanish quite
When morn is pearly.
O little space between the morn and night ! ”

Once in some quiet weather,
Before I knew this earth and want and blame,
I heard you, felt no shame ;
Your song was mine, my heart was high as yours.
Afar together
We knew the light whereby the soul endures.

Surely your song is tender ;
For joy and not for judgment let it be,
Till shame has passed from me.
So may I live this day remembering you,
(Comrade of splendour)
Yet not with sorrow ; for I knew, I knew.

SEPTEMBER

WHEN sleep is light

Or shot with visioning :

When no sleep comes, but all the happy night

You lie to watch the clouds and stars in flight :

See on the threshold Spring.

Her signs are these :

(Ah, these and many more !)

You hear at dawn resurgent melodies,

You feel a thrill in leafless garden-trees,

A throb in the heart's core.

On the wild hills

The great trees wave and shout,

“ More life, O goddess ! ” Then Her presence fills

Their singing leaves that no harsh winter kills.

The trees are rapt, devout.

Then in the night
The moon through folds of mist
Soars free : but soon a ring of sudden white
Snare it again. Vast ring of rain, how bright,
Where loose clouds fling and twist !

And scents are Hers.
O scents that touch the soul !
O longing, O reproach that wakes and stirs
In hearts that feel the fragrant, bloomy furze,
While low the storm-clouds roll !

More scent, sweet pain !
It comes the heath-born, fierce
Boronia : at whose birth the gods were fain
To bare the breast and feel the passionate gain
Of mortal woes that pierce.

Her signs are these :

(Ah, these and many more !)

The moon's great ring of rain, the shouting trees,
Wild scents that stab, and quickening melodies
To throb in the heart's core.

THE NEW SONG

AUSTRALIA, you our own,
You last leaf shaken from Igdrasil,
To bear us forward by good or ill,
As the winds of fate have blown :
As the winds of fate have blown,
You fell from the Life-Tree late, alone,
You heard the winds through the bare boughs thrill,
You caught the great winds' moan.

And not as a crooning sound,
Nor a song of glittering triumphs won
On easy levels by set of sun,
Are the songs that you have found.
For the songs that you have found
Have come from the Life-Tree's holy ground ;
The Tree was a harp and the Harper One
Whose forehead the stars had crowned.

Your songs are pitying cries,
To see the havoc that wastes us men :
You call us far to the heights again,
With a tune that never dies.
With a tune that never dies
Your great woods call to the burning skies ;
They name you holy by hill and glen,
But when shall the incense rise ?

Australia, you our own,
You lonely once on the windswept bough,
That bough of Heaven, be strong for us now,
For the whole world's joy has flown,
Like a singing-bird is flown.
O sing, for the world is keyed to a drone ;
Sing long and lure us to toil and vow,
O shatter our hearts of stone.

THE SEEKER

WHIP-BIRD, whip-bird, calling through the deep-dawn
Calling through the chill time before the break of
day,

Lone bird, sweet bird, flying down the mountain,
Stay and let me hear you, beside the almond spray.

Seek her, seek her ; ah, you rise up early,
Hoping you may find her, the mate that went away.
Early, early, I would rise before you,
Had I any hope left, beside the almond spray.

Onward, onward, search the mountain over,
Call her where the creek calls and quiet shadows
play.

Only, only, come again at evening,
You and she together come, beside the almond
spray.

TRANSFORMATION

You boy with restless, weary eyes,
I tell you straight the thing I know.
You will not hear me ? Be it so.

A year ago your happy eyes
Were filled with life by earth and sea
And sun and all things fair and free ;

How light you sprang to meet the day,
Or raced a creek and heard it sing,
The little tumbling wordless thing :

Or near a lake at close of day,
You felt some godhead floating by,
And stared against the flaming sky.

And you were virgin like a faun ;

You lived, you laughed, you brooded still,

And caught the light from every hill :

Yet could not rest forever faun :

The soul was quick within, and pain

Shot lightning-bright through heart and brain.

What mortal stirred your waking soul ?

What wonder-woman came, alert

To spread the joy and ease the hurt ?

Boy, she that took, that keeps your soul,

Had done with faith and joy. Ah long

She feeds on you, the young, the strong.

How like a cat, all soft and still,

She comes, and waits, and waits, and looks ;

You find her eyes in all the nooks.

And ever nearer, nearer still,
Her eyes, alluring, avid, shine :
They drink your life as royal wine.

You cannot feel a sunset now,
Nor share the woodland's holy scent.
Your starving eyes are passion-spent.

What joyless longing tears you now.
Was it for this your soul awoke ?
O splendid heart that beat and broke !

VISITANT

WHO is he that understands
All the power of Beauty's hands ?
By the mercy of the Lord
In her right she bears a sword ;
Though the thrust thereof is deep,
Stabbing hearts from sodden sleep,
In her left she carries dew,
Easing hearts that waken true.
Till the world of wonder die,
Beauty, look ! is passing by.

When the blackbird sings alone,
Pouring forth in raptured tone

Through the dark before the day
Praise of star and bursting spray,
By the leaf that faintly stirs,
Surely all the hour is Hers :
Phosphor reigns in sapphire sky.
Beauty, look ! is passing by.

All day long the dust may beat
Through the wide and windy street,
Till the steadfast evening comes,
Enters little dreary homes ;
Then the baby free from harm,
Laid within its father's arm,
Droops the head for quiet sleep,
Where a heart is throbbing deep.
Soft the baby's fine-spun hair,
Hearts are soft that linger there.
Ere the tears of joy be dry,
Beauty, look ! is passing by.

Under gums and sassafras
Aged tree-boles fall and pass,
Mingled then like mouldering bones,
Through the fern and over stones
Purls the little creek and sings,
Ever young from secret springs ;
There the land-crab's gray-blue claw
Huddles to his furtive maw
Matted leaves and sinks again
Toward a deep and marshy den.
Overhead the fronds of fern
Spread their covert, and in turn
Sassafras and gums that rise
Meet the blaze of summer skies ;
While this gully down the hill
Works its dark and quiet will,
Sheltered close, and you may seek
Every reach along the creek,
Ere you find a space of sun
Where the ripples laugh to run ;

Only here and there a frond
Waving feels the light beyond :
Did you see a Presence flow
Tranquil through the sudden glow ?
Did you hold your heart and cry,
Beauty, look ! is passing by.

THE FOREST-DWELLER

IN the town that day I found her,
In the noise and glare,
Watched her pacing lightly, slowly,
Waiting there ;
On my dull eyes gazing wholly,
Sprang a shady forest round her
Everywhere.

Woodlands quiver into being
Round her moving form ;
Magic is it ? Ah, but see her,
Human, warm,
Here, our comrade. Should we free her
She would be alone and fleeing
Through a storm.

You philosophers, expound her !
What she gives I know ;
But she takes from us who love her,
Needs our glow ;
She that has the skies above her
Needs our comrade-love, and round her
See it flow.

THE FAMILIAR PLACE

CITY roofed by highest heaven,
Rooted in the earth we love,
Place of call for every spirit,
Those who circling from above
Enter human souls and wrestle,
Then departing seek their place,
Where Creation's flaming ramparts
Guard the furthest rim of space :

City where the tales of poets
Every hour are coming true,
Love, transforming, daunting, swaying,
Death, creating souls anew :
Where the skies are bright with visions
And the streets on every hand
Spell a mute, appealing message
For a saint to understand :

Other cities, voices tell me,
Age-old beauty consecrates :
Other cities glow with colour,
Stir with mightier loves and hates :
City, little world of wonder,
Only world I ever knew,
Hell may gape or heaven may open,
I'll know all through knowing you !

Melbourne, 1908.

REMORSE

AND I that have tasted, tasted
The waters of remorse distilled for me
From wells beside a moonless sea,
Shall I receive again the powers I wasted ?

And you whom my sin has riven,
You who have suffered long (and mine the blame),
Will you reviving feel the same
As then before the blinding storms had driven ?

We live, and our work and laughter
Can fill the days and hush the bitter cry
Of broken hopes that cannot die.
What thoughts corrode the years that follow after !

THE HOUR

GAINING an hour alone I lived with you.

First all the lonely thoughts, the clan of Death,
Held me and broke my puny courage through.

I wept, I said your name in underbreath.

A hundred times I called, " My Love, my Mate " :

The moments passed, the sorrow shook me still.
Then came a glimpse as through a little gate ;

I watched you close, my mate, and took my fill.

There I beheld you down those marvellous days

Before we knew our love, before we knew :
Some life, some grace, some power in all your ways
Drew me again as in those days it drew.

Then like a wave your love before my feet
Broke ; we knew all ; the dwindling hour grew sweet.

LOSS

ONCE in a breathless day our love seemed slain,
Not ours the deed, but ours, but ours, the woe,
The two lives hurled apart, so to remain,
Though we had learnt the bonds of space to unknow.

I faced the blackness, scanned the Nevermore,
But knew—how little ! For I took my pen,
Saying, “ This heavier pain than all before,
When I have told my mate will lift again.”

Out of the dark some cold hand touched my wrist,
The pen must drop. To you no word must pass ;
Ever between us rides a blinding mist,
Heaven-high, it spreads like fire in yellow grass.

O you my helper, you my heart's relief,
What's left when you my love become my grief !

REVELATION

DARK little bird,
Dark little storm of passionate wings and throat,
Voiceless awhile amid the laughing leaves,
Ah give your little cry that once I heard ;
A lone tear's utterance that croons and grieves,
One note.

Gray of the sky,
Gray, silent sea with joyless dreams afloat,
Smitten across the North by wintry beams,
What of the empty air, the dreams that die :
Beyond the sea a purple coastland gleams,
Remote.

To understand
That cheer of purple shade, that deathless note :
Ah so to understand all peace, all pain :
Soft like a bird fluttered in mine your hand ;
Then like those hills your far look shone again,
Remote.

THE GARDEN

At early morn my garden
Is like a waiting cup,
A jewelled, empty cup ;
Until the sun arising,
With slow light fills it up,
With sweetness fills it up.

When blackbirds call no longer,
The light has tipped the pines,
And wandered down the pines,
I feel the garden tremble,
As now each young leaf shines,
Now every grass-blade shines.

With rippling leaves my garden
In green and gold is gay,
In changing light is gay ;
When I was young and little,
I used to dream and play
As these quick sunbeams play.

From leaf and frond and blossom
From leaping light and grace,
I gather heart-of-grace.
Once through the shimmering branches,
Gazing, I saw a face,
I saw my lover's face !

RESPONSE

I HAD not felt the storm,
But the dawn-seas knew it,
And darkly dim from rim to rim
Gathered their forces to it.

So might I through the darkness yearn,
And throb with stormy day's return.

I had not felt the wind,
But the birch trees knew it,
Slim branches bent the way it went,
The leaves were trembling through it.

So might I feel the lightest breath
Of ever-passing life and death !

THE PRISONER

It seems the world would set itself
The task of still reminding me ;
So many little hints of you
Keep crowding in and finding me.

To-day absorbed I passed along,
And town was only town to me ;
A crossing woke my sight ; I thought
“ Just here, two eyes laughed down to me ! ”

Sometimes I think outside my door
There sounds a footstep known to me,
But passing on. Not so would pass
The step that brought my own to me.

Familiar things, the dawn, the dark,
The trees, the stars, are binding me.
Forget ? How can I, all the world
Reminding me, reminding me !

IN THE CONCERT HALL

WHO is to blame ? The woman,
Just for being there
Simple and human ?
The man who wants to look at her,
And slightly turns his chair,
And as he likes will watch her faintest stir ?

I wonder if he guesses
How his casual stare
Stabs and oppresses ;
The woman dreads to raise her eyes
Or even touch her hair ;
All seems a pose to which his gaze replies.

The thing is hardly level :
Woman, if you glance
You're called a devil ;
For hours he tempts and you endure.
Behold the world advance :
You're paying now for Cleopatra's lure.

WATTLE GROVE

BECAUSE the little street was foul and dank,
And factories glowered upon it from above,
And low fogs filled it from the river bank,
Or hot winds through its narrows burst and strove,
Because it missed the westering star of love
And dawn's cloud heralds rising rank on rank,
The stolid burghers named it "Wattle Grove."
The very board they wrote the words on shrank.

FRIENDS

WE did not speak the word,
We talked and idled there,
Yet something deep was stirred.

You're like a dainty bird,
So quick to skim the air,
You would not speak the word.

But in my heart I heard,
And softly I declare
That something deep was stirred.

We each love many a third,
Maybe, but love's to spare
For . . . Do not speak the word !

Our talk is past and blurred
So slight it was, so bare.
Yet something deep was stirred.

Kind silence ministered
To seal our compact rare :
We did not speak the word,
But something deep was stirred.

GLOW

LIGHTING the fire, my dear,
Setting the logs and the chips,
Somehow I felt you near,
You and your eyes and your lips.

First, as the tiny spark
Steadied beneath and shone,
You seemed bright in the dark,
You, and the night was gone.

Gray smoke rose in a stream,
Lit with a gathering glow.
Soft as your hair in a dream,
Dim, long drifts of it flow.

Lighting the fire, my dear,
Watching the strong flame start,
Somehow I'm glad with fear,
Thinking I feel your heart !

A BALLAD OF SNOW

ACROSS the snow-deep inland plain
I went with none beside ;
There came a sailor down that way,
A sailor with his bride,
Then from their joy they smiled to me,
And, " Glad New Year ! " they cried.

And " Glad New Year ! " I answered them,
And passed the sleeping fields.
(White sleep, that dreams of purple spring,
Dreams long, and wakes, and yields).
And a young moon long before the night
Shone across woods and wealds.

Lovers that meet in wintry day,
To part before the spring,
Hear me : to part is not to die ;
The sea is no great thing,
O you who keep for every day
Hearts that cry out and sing !

But round the skyline ran the wood,
Black, stilled with many snows :
I found a way, I dared, I trod
Within where no wind blows,
Where no wind blows the winter through ;
The whole wood waits and knows.

The boles were red and purple all ;
I thought : Come, little bride,
In winter snow these pines have peace,
Where lonely heart may hide,
Come soon, for all the summer long
Their noise is like a tide ;

And like the tide that calls your man
A thousand miles away.
You will not hear, you cling to him,
Knowing he dare not stay,
He cannot stay. You kiss for trust
And send him on his way.

The wood that hearkens tells not forth,
And the moon gleams near it yet.
And joy was theirs and peace was mine
This day when lovers met.
Across the cold world hear, my mate,
Before this moon be set !

STROMBOLI

WE passed at night by Stromboli,
Across a rapt and moonlit sea,
The island-mountain glimmered white
Beyond the waters' pallid light,
So pure it seemed, a place apart,
And yet it keeps a burning heart.

The night we passed by Stromboli,
Was it yourself came near to me ?
The Southern day began for you
While moonlit dark was all we knew :
Did you awake and rise and work,
Till I could feel you through the mirk ?

The lightnings haunted Stromboli
From foamy clouds beside the sea,
The moon would chill the burning heart,
But lightnings make the demon start,
Who dwells below the mountain caves
And darkly stirs the summer waves.

The night we passed by Stromboli,
Both Near and Far were known to me,
And vanished both ; and you and I
Flashed in the lightning through the sky
And felt the mountain pure, apart,
And knew, ah *well*, the burning heart !

LONELINESS

THE moon is riding full and clear
Above the plains of snow.
I feel the strange and sudden fear
That little children know,

That pang of grief they never own,
When only half afraid,
They pity God who dwells alone
Beyond the worlds He made !

MEETING

THERE were lights and voices through the house,
The walls closed comfort in ;
I had an errand out in the night,
I opened the door and the moon shone white,
Shone cold, with her crescent thin.

There was need for a shawl as I left the house ;
I shivered beside the door.
Into the shadowed paths I stepped ;
Something woke in my heart and leapt
I was cold no more.

And had I forgotten there in the house,
That Night was filled with you ?
Night that pavilions near and far,
Ready, throbbing with mist and star,
Shall steep our souls in dew.

There are lights, I see them, through the house,
From some far land they shine.
Gone for awhile is the fireside speech ;
I am as one who has left the beach,
To bathe in the tide divine.

And you, your spirit has left its house ;
Across the world you came.
On between Heaven and Earth we glide,
Borne, as one on a dew-dark tide,
Through a world without a name.

(And those two lovers who fled their house,
To drift through lasting Hell—
How can we weep for Paolo ?
Pity Francesca ? All their woe
They bear unparted well !)

Yet see, my lover, we build a house,
Our spirit-hands are strong.
Fast it grows as our great love grows,
Firm in the misty night it shows,
We shall use it long.

But now the lights in the earthly house
Draw me and send you far.
And the great world rolls between us yet ?
No, in the hollow of night we met,
In the night by mist and star.

THE WATCHER

THE room was full of folk,
With light word chasing word.
I watched a sweet, gay woman :
Her dress was like the creamy curd.

On a low stool she was,
Her white arms clasped her knees :
Dark-lashed her blue eyes glinted,
Her red lips laughed against a breeze.

“ Against a breeze,” I thought,
And saw that room no more ;
I saw the slender woman
Crouched on a sun-lit, reedy shore.

Pan is not dead, not dead !
Behold his worshipper,
With happy eyes attending,
Near little waves and reeds astir.

She laughs against the breeze,
Or scans the untarnished sky :
Some harbinger is coming,
Some word from gods that cannot die.

On a low mound she rests,
Her robe is like the curd ;
Say, what shall bring her tidings,
A sudden cloud, a speeding bird ?

Perhaps the reeds' low song
For her shall utter speech :
Perhaps the shining waters
Shall break in words along the beach !

Her dreamy fingers play
And find an ear-shaped shell ;
She takes it, smiles to hearken,
As one who hears a far-off bell.

I think some radiant faun
Will come to take her soon,
To show her cunning dances
Spun from the rays of sun and moon :

Then surely they will go
Where all the worlds are made,
And build with Pan the joyful
Great domes of air in every glade.

BEFORE

LIGHTS of Berlin in the Northern sky behind me,
Wintry dark and an empty road before,
So with the wind I drift, for a great wind shouting,
Tears at the high, bare trees, at the planes and lindens,
All day long it tore.

Trees in a line by the road, and beside, beyond them,
Wide, dim fields in the old year ploughed and sown ;
Now with the winds of the early spring-time throbbing,
See them there by the lamp at the long road's turning ;
Rough and brown and lone.

Out in the dark they roll with the sods unbroken,
Stalk nor blade to be seen, but the earth is quick.
Yearning, passionate power of the dark earth waiting :
Soon, ah soon, comes the lark and the green blade
starting,
Juicy stems grown thick.

Whether I drift with the wind or I turn to face it,
Still I behold my heart as a waiting field,
Stretching far in the dark while it longs for summer ;
Come, strong wind, and quicken the growth within
me,
Cause me to stir and yield.

Clearer heard than my feet on the metalled roadway,
Comes to my ears the rustle of crops to be,
Comes to me now the voice of my mate in summer,
He and I to be strong, sure, ripe together . . .
Wind, blow long, blow free !

VOTIVE

Too long have I been wandering
Seeking the perfect song to sing

To do her honour,

What though my lady be so sweet,
So past all praising, so complete,
Before years die I'll dare repeat

Some praise upon her.

I saw her first—a slender maid.

Her hair lay soft (no cunning braid)

Like autumn weather,

Her shadowy eyes beneath its hood,
They only saw what things they would,
And dreamed and found the dreaming good,
Long hours together.

Her lips, her red lips even then
Seemed to have lured a thousand men
Through all the ages :
So deathless gleamed her pearl-white face,
Its carven lines no hand could trace
Came from that undiscovered place,
Whence poets' pages.

My lady still, I see her now ;
What tears, what joys have touched her brow ;
O magic woman.
O high unknowing subtlety,
To live, to act unceasingly,
Yet living grow in mystery
Above the human !

Her laughter ever close at hand
Has made her wise to understand
The world about her.

On many a heart her look has shone,
Till all the ache of grief is gone ;
O pity all who must have known
The world without her !

Hair of a woman, meetly bound,
Days of a woman, clear and sound
With life and duty.
At night she lets the dim hair fall,
And glimmering white within it all,
She dreams, and dreaming hears the call
From hills of beauty.

O flower of lotus lit within :

(No measured praise can I begin.)

O pale, O splendid,

My lady mine, I seek a word

Sweet as the call of mating bird,

To name my lady, all unheard :

My song is ended.

THE RETURN

AND when the last, last winds have touched the lake,
A vow upon my age-dead heart I'll take,
And in that waiting hour when all is still,
I will come back, my Sweet, for this time's sake.

I will come back, and you ! Ah, from what hill,
What valley, in what world ? From good or ill ?
This thing we know : our hearts with love will
ache . . .

And shall we hear, as now, one late thrush trill ?

